The Emerging Media
of Early America

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FOUR YEARS AGO, with the completion of the five-volume *A History of the Book in America* series on the horizon, an advisory board for the American Antiquarian Society's distinguished History of the Book in American Culture program convened under the leadership of John Hench and board chair David Shields to develop a vision for the future of the program. The board, of which I was a member, agreed upon a series of three conferences to explore future directions in the history of the book. I am honored by the opportunity to help host the first of these conferences, on the 'Histories of Print, Manuscript, and Performance in America,' and by the opportunity to present this distinguished lecture. I wish to thank Ellen Dunlap, John Hench, and others on the Society's Council and staff who have given me this opportunity. I wish to thank as well David D. Hall, who inaugurated and for many years has presided so effectively over the program and the book series. It was David whose work on the Puritans influenced my early scholarship, and it was David who helped me begin to see the connections between my interest in performance and oratory and the history of the book when he

invited me to be a guest scholar at the summer seminar that he led in June 1998. I owe him a debt of gratitude, and I am delighted that he can be here this weekend. I am also pleased to see previous Wiggins lecturers and heads of the program here this evening. Their presence suggests the crucial continuities that are the basis for new departures in the field.

Histories of Emergence

The title of my lecture this evening is 'The Emerging Media of Early America.' By 'emerging media' I mean three distinct but interrelated things that are central to my argument. The first sense that I attach to the phrase 'emerging media' is the familiar one—the novel electronic media of today, particularly the expanding domain of web-based archives, as they affect the study of early America. The American Antiquarian Society is at the forefront in creating electronic archives that promise to transform the field. As many of you know, working in cooperation with Readex Corporation, AAS has prepared an immense web-based archive of materials, the Archive of Americana. We now have digital, searchable, expanded editions of *Early American Imprints*, based on the Evans and Shaw-Shoemaker bibliographies of works published in America between 1639 and 1819. In its previous incarnation *Early American Imprints* resided in our libraries on microcard, an awkward, eye-straining, and increasingly obsolescent technology. The Archive of Americana bundles *Early American Imprints* together with the *Early American Newspapers* archive based on Charles Brigham's bibliography of that name, the *United States Congressional Serial Set*, *American State Papers*, and *American Broadsides and Ephemera* based on the exceptional collection of the American Antiquarian Society. It is difficult to imagine how this extraordinary set of electronic resources could fail to transform the study of early America. Issues of cost and access remain significant obstacles to the archive's adoption at many universities and colleges, as became evident in a set of exchanges that took place on the Society of Early Americanists listserv last fall. As access spreads, however,

Fig. 1. 'Catlin's Indian gallery (for a few evenings only) at Amory Hall, corner of Washington and West Streets' [Boston, 1838]. Broadside, 2 leaves; 32 cm. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

and as the inevitable bugs are worked out, the electronic archive will increasingly transform not only what scholars of early America read and teach, but *how* those texts are read and taught.

Let me cite one prominent example of how the electronic archive will change the way scholars research the period. Searchable databases like these alter our relationship to our print sources, allowing us to search thousands of books, pamphlets, broadsides, and newspapers for a key term, track its prevalence, and consider its changing meanings. In a matter of hours we can conduct a survey of a vast array of printed materials that in the past would have taken many years to complete. Moreover, web-based archives will permit scholars, teachers, and students to readily assemble unique archives of materials. Electronic resources not only give us new tools for reading and teaching early texts, they encourage us to ask new questions of the texts. My

Fig. 2. 'The Eighth National Woman's-Rights
Convention,' [New York, 1858]. Broadside, 1 sheet;
20 x 13 cm. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

own field of colonial and early republican literature is a field that
for the most part lacks a body of canonical works produced in au-
thoritative editions. Traditional textual editing, which aims to
create such definitive editions, has been driven by fields such as
Renaissance studies that have a canon of major authors whose
works pose rich problems of authoritativeness and authenticity,

Fig. 3. 'Dr. Swan & Lady, the well known mesmeric & botanic physicians, of Lowell,' [Worcester ?, 1850]. Broadside, 1 sheet; 21 x 16 cm. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

with Shakespeare being the preeminent case. Textual editing has not been a major preoccupation of early Americanists working before 1820, in part because the sense of a canon has been so weak. I submit that the new modalities of electronic archives are particularly well suited to the textually heterogeneous field of early American studies. As electronic access to these archives

encourages reflection about the distinctive textual practices of early America, we are well positioned to contribute importantly to the emerging field devoted to the study of forms of textuality that has developed around the field of textual editing.

Variously referred to as 'Textual Cultures,' 'Textual Studies,' and 'Text-Media Studies,' as the group at my home institution of Notre Dame is known, these approaches bring together traditional textual editing with the history of the book and the study of non-print forms of textuality (including manuscript, electronic media, and performance).[1] Today the rise of the Internet and the World Wide Web increasingly demand that we interrogate the forms and practices of textuality. They lead us to consider the nature of texts, comparing books or newspapers to websites. They encourage us to think more deeply about how texts produce meaning, for instance, by considering the changing practices of reading and writing brought on by Internet usage. And our experiences of these new electronic media highlight how verbal forms affect society and culture. Who has access to them and who does not? What forms of social interaction and creativity do these forms foster, and what forms do they inhibit? Does the Internet threaten the existence of the nineteenth-century public sphere, linked as it was to the modern newspaper, as Cass Sunstein specu-

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1. Important recent works in the developing study of textual media include Jerome McGann, *Radiant Textuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); N. Katherine Hayles, *Writing Machines* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2002); David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, eds., *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2003); Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree, eds., *New Media: 1740–1915* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2003); Alan Liu, *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Peter Stoicheff and Andrew Taylor, eds., *The Future of the Page* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); and Faimonda Modiano, Leroy F. Searle, and Peter Shillingsburg, *VoiceTextHypertext: Emerging Practices in Textual Studies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004). 'Performance' often falls out of these discussions, or is used metaphorically (as is the case in McGann). For an earlier work that addresses performance as a set of material practices analogous to print and electronic media, see Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). See as well the manifesto of the University of Notre Dame Text-Media Studies Group (Jesse M. Lander, Sandra M. Gustafson, and Stephen Fredman), http://www.nd.edu/~english/manifesto1.html.

lates in *republic.com*? For Sunstein, electronic news consumption allows readers to filter out unsought information, limiting their exposure to the wide range of unfamiliar issues and experiences that is an essential component of a true public sphere. Or alternatively, does the Internet promote new, more democratic forms of public activism, such as the much-discussed *MoveOn.org* campaign from the last presidential election?[2] And, by extension, what light do these new forms of textuality shed on an earlier era's textual forms and practices? What new opportunities do they create for representing and interpreting the textual regimes of eras past? The Archive of Americana both makes these questions more exigent and gives scholars the tools to begin answering them.

In this first sense, then, the 'emerging media' of early America refers to media that are emerging right now, as I speak—electronic technologies applied to the materials of early America—and to the new questions that these new media encourage us to ask of old texts. The second sense that I attach to the phrase refers to the media that were emergent in the colonies and early United States before 1900. These include, most prominently and familiarly, the rapidly spreading medium of print and its textual technologies (the book, the broadside, the magazine, the newspaper, the dime novel, and so forth) that are the subject of history of the book scholarship. They include as well the precursors to modern representational and communicative media that swept the United States beginning in the 1820s, such as the daguerreotype and the photograph, developed in an early form in the 1820s and gaining widespread popularity with Daguerre's invention of 1839; the electric telegraph, which appeared to great acclaim in 1844; the telephone, whose earliest version was developed in 1828, followed by Alexander Graham Bell's in 1876; the phonograph, patented by Edison in 1877; the electric light that

2. Cass Sunstein, *republic.com* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3–10. The contributors to *Democracy and New Media*, eds. Henry Jenkins and David Thorburn (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2003) explore a range of issues involving electronic media and civil society.

transformed theaters, ball fields, and other performance spaces after its introduction in 1879; and the advances in architectural and acoustical technologies that reached new levels of excellence and attracted international attention when Adler and Sullivan's Auditorium Theater opened in Chicago in 1889.[3]

The 'electrified' world that we know today is, in crucial ways, a product and extension of these nineteenth-century technologies. Moreover, these transformations in communicative media had a long prehistory in both scientific research and theories of communication. Scientific demonstrations were one major medium for the dissemination and dissimulation of technical knowledge. They became popular fare in the eighteenth century, and for over a century they offered an important bridge between science and entertainment. These performances participated in the social construction of the technical expert and the charlatan; explored the relationships between science, pseudo-science, and magic; and staged the display of technological and media expertise as a form of entertainment.

Benjamin Franklin was an early master of the electrical performance and an expert at exploiting its intersections of technological, communicative, and political power. Franklin is famous for his skilled manipulation of a variety of media in the creation of his public image, including his electrical performances and the mythology that developed around them. In his *Autobiography* Franklin describes how he developed a series of experiments that could be performed to entertain and educate the public about the properties of electricity. Beginning with an imperfect set of Scottish experiments, which he improved and developed, Franklin added his own discoveries and worked some new English experiments into his performances. Out of this international exchange, he succeeded in

3. Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking about Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), offers a valuable account of this previous generation of 'new media.' On the developments in acoustics, see Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2002).

creating a spectacle so compelling that, he writes, 'my house was continually full . . . with people who came to see these new wonders'. [4] In much the same way that he had established printers throughout the British North American colonies in order to spread learning and public spirit, Franklin then had several sets of electrical equipment made and trained his friends in their use to help educate the public. One of Franklin's friends proceeded to make a living at these demonstrations, performing them throughout the colonies and the West Indies. Franklin, meanwhile, built an international reputation as a serious scientist on the work that lay behind his experimental performances and eventually won membership in the Royal Society for his electrical research. [5]

In preparing this lecture I was amused to discover a website called 'The Electric Franklin.' The home page for this website compares Franklin the man to the Internet. According to the authors of the site, 'The diversity that is the Internet may be epitomized by only one person in history—Benjamin Franklin—someone commercially successful, ever concerned and involved with the public good, a great communicator, and a remarkable man of science and technology, finding practical effective solutions to real problems.' [6] The cluster of values associated here with both Franklin and the Internet are worth remarking: market-driven and simultaneously devoted to the public good, both Franklin and the

4. Franklin describes his development of electrical experiments in his autobiography (see J. A. Leo Lemay and P. M. Zall, eds., *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography: An Authoritative Text* [New York: W.W. Norton, 1986], 130–34 (quotation, p. 130). It is difficult at such moments in Franklin's work not to read the narrative as political allegory. Here the important but flawed Scottish experiments with which he begins could represent the influential body of eighteenth century Scottish philosophy, which Franklin improved upon while simultaneously integrating English advances.

5. In *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), Michael Warner suggests that print is the primary material metaphor for Franklin's characteristic practice of disseminating knowledge. As the circulation of electrical performances suggests, however, print did not have the priority that Warner ascribes to it. For a reading which similarly stresses the many forms that the basic pattern of circulation takes and relates it to capitalism, see Mitchell Robert Breitwieser, *Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin: The Price of Representative Personality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

6. 'The Electric Ben Franklin,' http://www.ushistory.org/franklin/
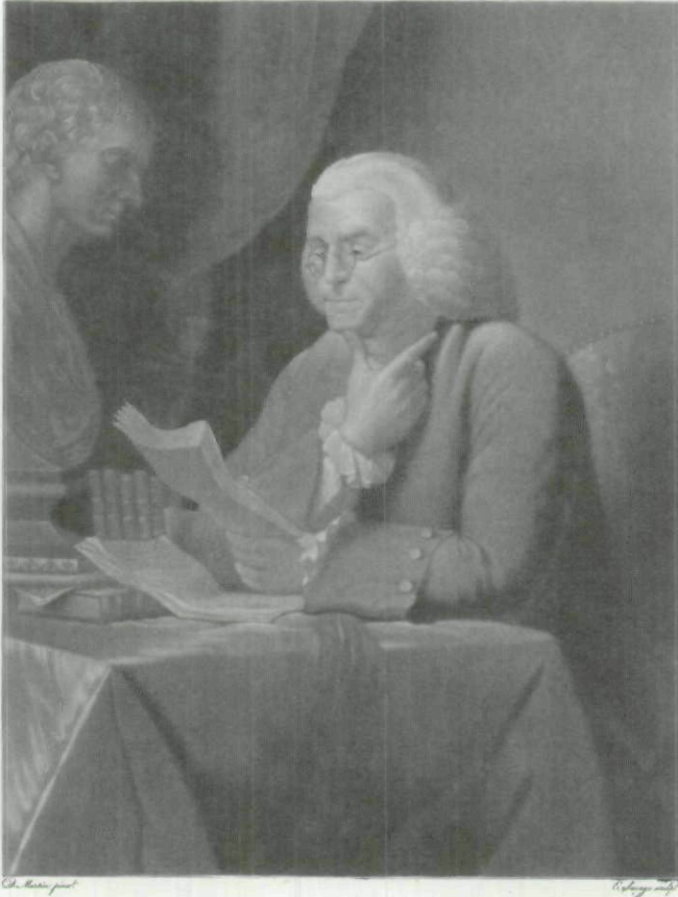
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Fig. 4. Edward Savage, 'Benjamin Franklin.' Mezzotint 1793, based on the 1767 portrait by David Martin, London. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

Internet stand for the application of technological advances to practical problems, notably advancing practices of communication.

Long before Franklin, Isaac Newton set the stage for the theoretical convergence of emerging electronic media and communication practices in his *Principia*, where he described 'a certain

THE PHILOSOPHER & HIS KITE.

Designed expressly for the Columbian Magazine by J.L.Morton.

Fig. 5. J. L. Morton, 'The Philosopher & His Kite,' printed by W. Neale, for the *Columbian Magazine*. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

most subtle Spirit, which pervades and lies hid in all gross bodies; by the force and action of which Spirit, the particles of bodies mutually attract one another,' and which also causes animal movement and perception. Newton characterizes this binding action as the product of an 'electric and elastic Spirit.'[7] Newton's somewhat mystical assertion about a spirit whose action offered a theoretical means to conjoin material and spiritual phenomena inspired scientific research which promised to deliver on this Casaubon-like grand theory of the unification of all life forms.

7. Sir Isaac Newton, *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Motte, 2 vols. (London: Printed for Benjamin Motte, 1729), 2:393.

The underlying promise of unity took on psychological and social dimensions in Newton's theory and was extended in his followers, notably in the work of Anton Mesmer. Mesmer tapped into a widespread scientific and popular interest in electrical phenomena as they related to psychological states when he first tested his theories of mesmerism in the mid-1770s. Mesmer himself was attacked as a charlatan, his sexual ethics were impugned, and in 1784 a commission of the French Academy of Sciences that included Franklin among its members debunked Mesmer's 'fluid.'[8] After a period of suppression in the late eighteenth century, however, mesmerism grew into a widely popular movement, spreading throughout Europe and achieving particular prominence in the United States after 1830. Mesmerism was most popular in the United States around the time when the electric telegraph was introduced in 1844, when Samuel Morse telegraphed the message 'What hath God wrought!' from Washington to Baltimore. This convergence was no accident, for mesmerists elaborated an electrical theory of mind that paralleled and commented upon emerging electrical technologies.[9]

The electric telegraph was a long-anticipated technology with non-electrical precursors that reflected the term's root meaning of 'distance-writing,' as newspapers such as the *Daily Telegraph* continue to do today. Electricity elevated the telegraph to an en-

8. Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 62. Darnton mentions the popularity of Franklin's electrical performances in Paris on page 10.

9. Robert C. Fuller offers an account of mesmerism in the United States, focusing particularly on the relationship between mesmerism and psychology, in *Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982). Carolyn Thomas de la Peña relates mesmerism to electrical phenomena including magnetic healing in *The Body Electric: How Strange Machines Built the Modern America* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 92–98. A group of mesmeric works was collected in the *Library of Mesmerism and Psychology* published by Fowlers and Wells (Walt Whitman's publisher for the early editions of *Leaves of Grass*) around 1852. Of particular note in this collection is John Bovee Dods, *The Philosophy of Electrical Psychology; in a Course of Twelve Lectures*. Dods prints a letter dated February 12, 1850, from a group of United States Senators, including Henry Clay, Sam Houston, and Daniel Webster, inviting him to deliver his lecture series on electrical psychology for members of Congress.

tirely new level of significance. The successful implementation of the electric telegraph sparked an outpouring of enthusiasm remarkably similar both in volume and in imagery to the rhetoric surrounding the introduction of the World Wide Web. Mind was said to have triumphed over matter. The electric telegraph promised the destruction of national boundaries and the achievement of 'universal brotherhood.' Samuel Morse was credited with re-creating a universal language—the telegraphic code—that would reproduce the universal bonds that God destroyed at Babel. In the words of the Reverend Dr. Bellows, the telegraph would unite the 'scattered members' of humanity into 'one organic body, the great common humanity.'[10]

As the Reverend Dr. Bellows's words suggest, the nineteenth-century revolution in communications technologies was simultaneously a revolution in the way people thought about textual media. These once-new media transformed representational and communicative practices in ways that directly affected the nineteenth-century print revolution taking place simultaneously. Often overlooked in both the field of communications studies, which typically begins its analysis with 'the institutional birth of film and broadcasting and the development of large audiences in the twentieth century,'[11] and by history of the book scholars who most often relate print culture to manuscript and oral forms, these older new media provided contemporaries with a symbolic and functional point of reference for print technologies during this period. The rise of what is often called 'print culture' took place during the first age of electrical research and was profoundly shaped by its emerging media.

The emerging media of early America also included novel technologies of manuscript and performance. In this third sense, the

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10. For a discussion of the fanfare surrounding the introduction of the electric telegraph, see Jill Lepore, *A is for American: Letters and Other Characters in the Newly United States* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 139–41. Quoted passages are on page 140.

11. Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New*, 3.

phrase 'emerging media' refers to the fact that, regardless of whether they are 'old' or 'new,' media are never static. They change internally, and they change in relation to one another. Manuscript was more than a way station on the road to print, but rather developed new forms and social functions. As J. W. Saunders, D. F. McKenzie, Harold Love, David Hall, David Shields, Carla Mulford, Margaret Ezell, and others have shown, manuscript forms were not simply replaced by print but continued to emerge and serve a variety of important social and cultural functions even after print became widely available.[12] The circulation of literary manuscripts thrived at the moment in the eighteenth century that print culture underwent dramatic expansion. Manuscript permitted the formation of alternative publics and alternate articulations of 'the public' well into the nineteenth century. The writing of personal letters was a major literary activity in the nineteenth century and, as Elizabeth Hewitt has recently argued, epistolary forms provided a vital technology of social intercourse and nation formation.[13] At the same time, new manuscript forms emerged to challenge the dominance of print. Describing a vogue for album poetry, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in 1840 that 'a revolution in literature is now giving importance of the portfolio over the book.'[14] Emily Dickinson's fascicles represent a variant of the manuscript-based publication practice that Emerson described. As recent criticism

12. J. W. Saunders, 'The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry,' *Essays in Criticism* 1 (1951): 139–64; D. F. McKenzie, 'Speech—Manuscript—Print,' in *Making Meaning: 'Printers of the Mind' and Other Essays*, Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez, S. J., eds. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 237–58; Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); David D. Hall, 'The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century,' in *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 97–150; David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Carla Mulford, ed., 'Introduction' to *Only for the Eye of a Friend: The Poems of Annis Boudinot Stockton* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995); Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

13. Elizabeth Hewitt, *Correspondence and American Literature, 1770–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

14. 'New Poetry' in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Lectures*, Joel Porte, ed. (New York: Library of America, 1983), 1169.

has amply demonstrated, Dickinson's refusal of print publication is best seen, not as a pathological fear of publicity, nor as a Luddite rejection of communications technologies, but rather as an essential component in a project to produce poetry that transforms the way language and textuality can be understood.[15]

Even more striking than the creation of new modalities of manuscript in the age of print is the exuberant emergence of performance media in the early United States. The history of American performance media is an especially useful field for complicating teleological narratives that trace textual technologies from orality to writing to print. Their emergence in the nineteenth century reflects a complex weave of social, cultural, and technological influences. The small size, geographic dispersal, and jurisdictional complexity of urban areas, coupled with widespread antitheatrical prejudice, inhibited the growth of a vibrant performance culture in the colonies and early republic. Preceding the emergence of a mature theater, and preparing the ground for it, touring performers offered dramatic readings. Such readings continued even after the theater began to develop as an institution, providing a dramatic supplement for those hungry for more theatrical fare and offering a performance alternative for those who continued to regard the theater with suspicion. By around 1820, the drama had emerged as a central component of urban cultural life in the United States. Such was the seriousness with which mid-century Americans regarded their theater culture that in 1849 the Astor Place Riot, sparked by transatlantic rivalries over 'democratic' American or 'aristocratic' British acting styles, resulted in the deaths of about twenty people. The growth of the theater reflected changing demographics and social attitudes. It also reflected changes in technology. Changes in theater design,

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15. Martha Nell Smith, a leader in the study of Dickinson's manuscripts and in their electronic dissemination, offers a valuable overview of critical approaches to these issues in 'Dickinson's Manuscripts,' *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, Gudrun Grabher, Roland Hagenbüchle, and Cristanne Miller, eds. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 113–37.
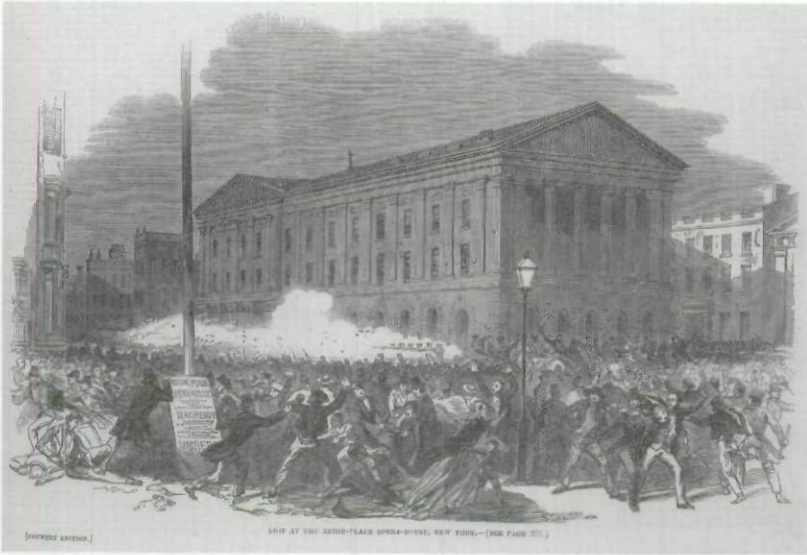
Fig. 6. 'Riot at the Astor-Place Opera-House, New York.' Woodcut. *Illustrated London News* (June 2, 1849), 369. By permission of the British Library.

the introduction of electrical lighting, and improvements in acoustics created new physical spaces that altered the social and aesthetic dynamics of the media of performance. The theatrical world of the nineteenth-century United States provides a rich and under-studied site for the study of how technology and ideology interact.

Other forms of performance evolved in ways that reflected both the impact of print media and the influence of the newly respectable institutions of the theater. The sermon, once the primary American performance genre, changed to reflect the emerging media context. Taking up strategies developed for the new mass print marketplace, which provided important tools of evangelization, sermons that highlighted storytelling increasingly came to supplant the text-doctrine-application structure of the Puritan sermon. Anticipated by George Whitefield's dramatic enactments of scripture texts and by Jonathan Edwards's compelling narratives of spiritual suffering and triumph, the popular evangelical literature

and drama of the nineteenth century increasingly shaped religious life.[16] In 1871 Mark Twain remarked that most Americans experienced the gospel through stage plays and religious novels 'and NOT from the drowsy pulpit.'[17] Prompted by this loss of pulpit authority, trends in church architecture fueled the mingling of sacred and secular performance. Beginning in 1880, auditorium churches were built to resemble theaters, highlighting the convergences between the sermon and the play, while asserting the primacy of the holy drama of the sermon over the worldly stage drama.[18]

Political oratory underwent similar alterations to appeal to a newly performance-savvy audience. It first emerged as a mass public medium during the Revolutionary period. As statehouse galleries were opened to the public, the novel scene of statesmen debating before 'the people' produced new ways of conceiving political representation.[19] Over the following decades, rhetorical styles and modes of address, conventions of audience behavior and political campaigning, statehouse architecture, and institutional rules both helped to shape and were themselves produced by changes in the political and cultural landscape. Around 1840 the stump speech emerged as the paradigmatic rhetorical form of antebellum democracy. The phrase originally referred to the novel practice of electioneering in the open air, with a tree stump for a platform. A whole range of meanings attached to antebellum democracy—including the newly acceptable practice of openly courting voters and soliciting votes, the minimal elevation over the audience provided by a tree stump, the conduct of politics in close proximity to nature, and the frontier sense of land being

16. 'Gender in Performance,' in Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 40–74.
17. Mark Twain quoted in David S. Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1.
18. Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
19. I discuss the emergence of political oratory as a public genre in chapters 3–7 of *Eloquence Is Power*.
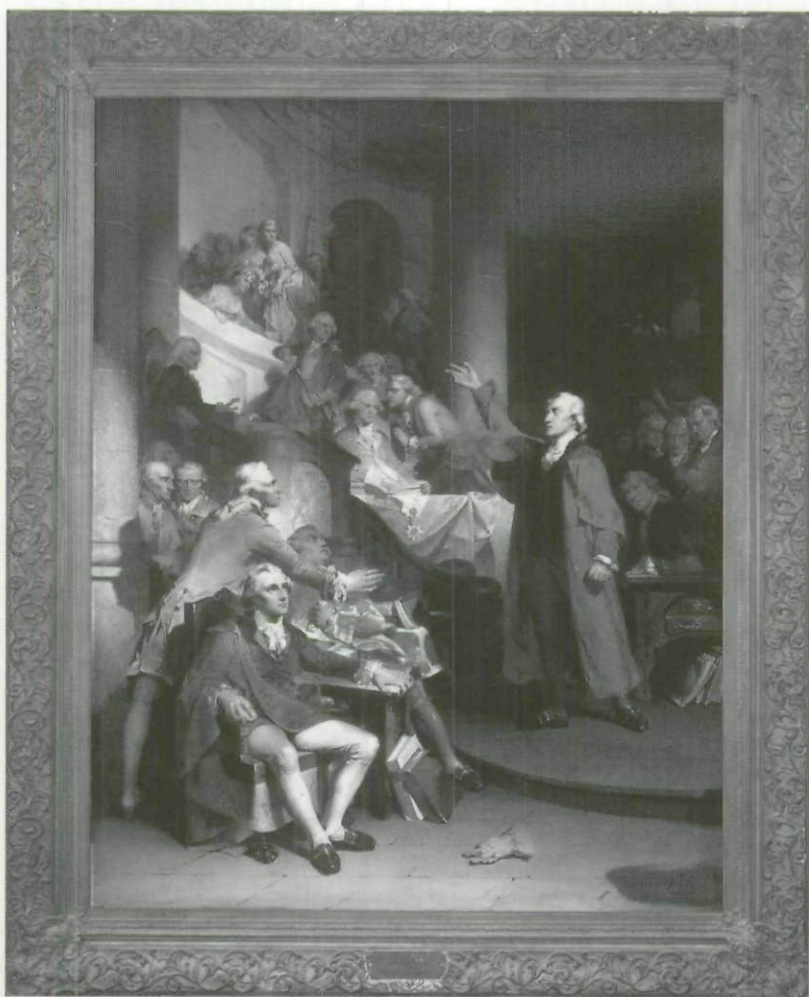
Fig. 7. Peter F. Rothermel, 'Patrick Henry before the Virginia House of Burgesses' (1851). Rothermel's heroic painting depicts Patrick Henry's May 29, 1765, speech against the Stamp Act. Henry warned the Virginia House of Burgesses that 'Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George the Third . . . may profit by their example. If this be treason, make the most of it.' Published in newspapers throughout the colonies, Henry's Stamp Act Resolutions prompted Thomas Jefferson's comment that Henry was 'the man who gave the first impulse to the ball of revolution.' Red Hill, Patrick Henry National Memorial, Brookneal, Virginia.

Fig. 8. George Caleb Bingham, *Stump Speaking* (1853–54). Oil on canvas 42¼ x 58 in. Saint Louis Art Museum. Gift of Bank of America.

cleared—took shape in the emergent form of the stump speech. Contemporaries understood, and sometimes deplored, the theatricality of the new genre. Perhaps the most conspicuously theatrical moment in the emergence of the stump speech took place during the presidential election of 1840. In that hotly contested race the Whigs successfully embraced the campaign techniques that had brought the Democrats such electoral success under Andrew Jackson. Whig leader Daniel Webster, who was the nation's most famous political orator and man of letters, cast aside his dignified demeanor and polished literary style in order 'to stump it,' as he put it.[20] Webster refuted charges that his rhetorical shift was

20. Webster's usage is quoted in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. 'stump,' http://www.oed.com.

The Indians giving a Talk to Colonel Bouquet in a Conference at a Council Fire, near his Camp on the Banks of Muskingum in North America, in Oct. 1764.

Benj. West

Fig. 9. 'A Conference held between some Indian Chiefs and Colonel Bouquet, in the Year 1764.' An engraving based on a painting by Benjamin West was first published in Bouquet's *Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians* (1766), and a second engraved copy appeared in the *Court Miscellany* (November 1766). Paul Revere made a new engraving that he signed 'P. Revere Sc.' An entry in his Day Book dated January 5, 1775, indicates that the engraving was made for the December 1774 issue of *Royal American Magazine*.

a bit of manipulative political theater by insisting on the deep truth of his newly democratized style: he was, he claimed, a true son of the frontier, raised by a plainspoken farmer in the mountains of New Hampshire.

Like the sermon and the political oration, the treaty conference between Native American leaders and colonial governments was a central performance genre that was powerfully affected by the emergence of the theater (fig. 9). Throughout the colonial and early national periods these conferences, conducted with great dramatic flair, and printed in a playbill-like format by Benjamin Franklin, incorporated native diplomatic conventions
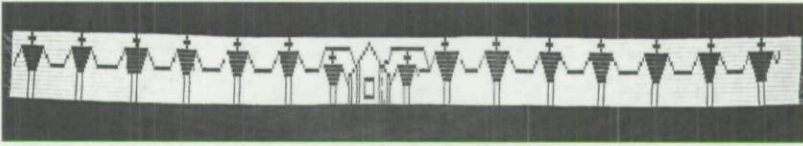
Fig. 10. Wampum belt. The record of a treaty with George Washington in 1789, this belt represents the sacred agreement between the Six Nations and the original thirteen United States colonies. At the center is the longhouse of the Six Nations. There are two figures on each side of the longhouse: the Mohawks are the Keepers of the Eastern Door and the Senecas are the Keepers of the Western Door of the Confederacy. They have joined their hands in friendship, a covenant with the thirteen colonies. Courtesy of the Jake Thomas Learning Centre, 2005, www.jakethomaslearningcentre.ca.

such as the Iroquois condolence ritual and the use of wampum (fig. 10). These rituals were designed in part to stage the relative equality of power between the colonial governments and their native negotiating partners. As whites established dominance over the continent, the performance technologies of American colonialism shifted away from the treaty conference and toward the Indian spectacle. This trend is visible in George Catlin's touring displays of his paintings beginning in the 1830s and, during the same period, in the eastern tour that United States authorities forced upon Black Hawk, the defeated leader of the Fox and Sauk resistance. This movement away from the relative mutuality of the treaty conference and toward the imperial spectacle of defeated nations culminated in the Buffalo Bill shows of the late nineteenth century, where the staging of frontier warfare replaced the staging of peacemaking (figs. 11–16).

A poignant testimony to the significance of media technologies as arbiters of cultural power appears in the narrative that Mahican leader Hendrik Aupaumut wrote of his 1794 mission to the western nations. Drawing on Mahican traditions, Aupaumut negotiated on behalf of George Washington's administration only to find himself attacked by both parties to the negotiations, the confederation of western nations led by the Shawnees and the United States government. Aupaumut had imagined that he
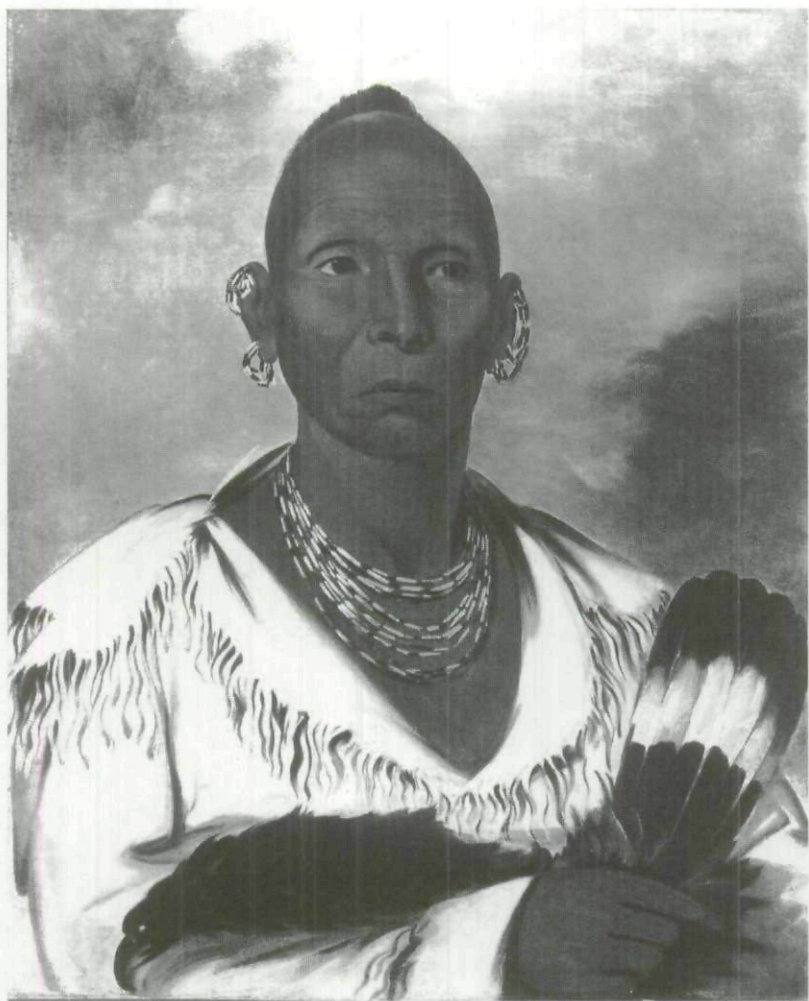
Fig. 11. George Catlin, 'Múk-a-tah-mish-o-káh-kaik, Black Hawk Promi-
nent Sac Chief,' 1985.66.2 Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of
Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.

Fig. 12. George Catlin, 'Ball-play of the Choctaw—Ball Up,' 1985.66.428A Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.

could create a position of cultural authority for the Mahicans in relation to the United States government analogous to the role they had held as diplomats and mediators among native communities prior to the Revolutionary War. His mission failed, and instead of achieving cultural respect and integration within the United States, Aupaumut ultimately led his community west to the fringes of the nation rather than, as he had hoped, establishing its influence at the very centers of United States power.

Aupaumut's narrative suggests the social and cultural complexities contained within this broadest sense of 'emerging media.' The traditions of Mahican diplomacy—wampum, oratory, the condolence ritual—proved to be highly unstable forms of mediation. Both sides came to view Aupaumut's willingness to use these traditional media

Fig. 13. George Catlin, 'Wi-jún-jon, Pigeon's Egg Head (The Light) Going to and Returning From Washington,' 1985.66.474 Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.

on behalf of the United States as a symptom of his inscrutability and untrustworthy nature. They failed to produce for him the image of sincerity and good will that he had hoped to create for himself as a representative of the Washington administration, and instead were treated as instruments of deception.[21]

21. For a longer account of Aupaumut's diplomatic career, see my discussion in *Eloquence Is Power*, 257–65.
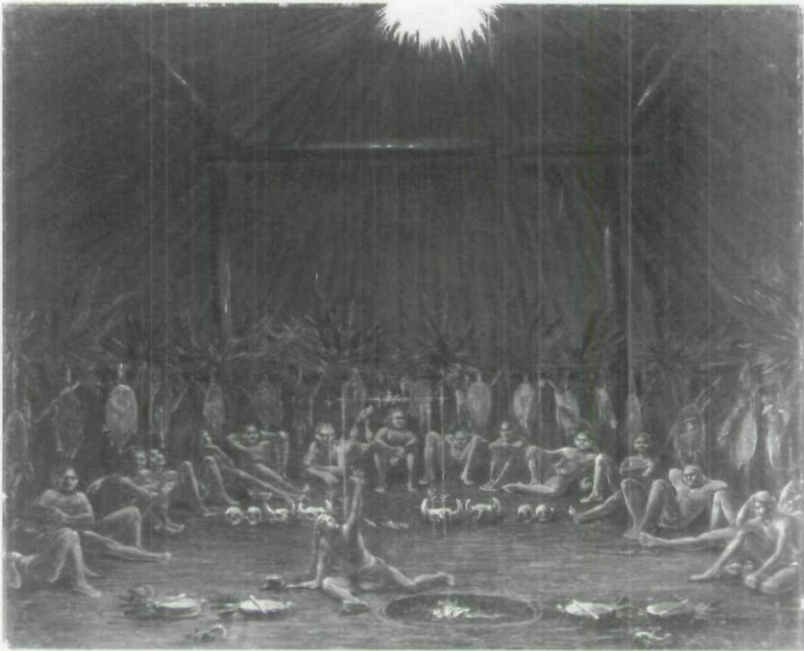
Fig. 14. George Catlin, 'Interior View of the Medicine Lodge, Mandan O-kee-pa Ceremony,' 1985.66.504 Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.

Theorizing Emergence in Histories of Verbal Media

The concept of 'emerging media' that I am proposing here refers to the ongoing technological, cultural, and ideological transformations that affect all media, whether 'old' or 'new.' I propose this conception of 'emerging media' as an alternative to what we might call the stadial theory of media technology, which models successive cultural stages from the oral and performed to writing and manuscript and from thence to print.[22] One common historiographical variant of the stadial theory distinguishes between evolving and residual media. As the association of 'evolving media'

22. My approach to these problems is similar to D. F. McKenzie's analysis of speech, writing, and print in the Renaissance as 'complementary' rather than 'competitive' textual

with biological evolution suggests, the assumption about such media is that they offer a new form destined ultimately to replace earlier verbal technologies. Print typically functions as the evolving medium in this evolutionary narrative, while more recent versions put electronic media in the role once played by print. 'Residual media' are remainders of a past communicative era, dinosaurs that survive into the age of mammals but are nevertheless doomed to extinction.[23] The concept of 'emerging media' differs significantly from this sense of linear development; it also should be distinguished from the narrower model of media in competition. Competition, a metaphor based on an understanding of media as essentially market-driven phenomena, is one mechanism of textual emergence, but it does not exhaust the possible modes of interaction between emerging media.[24] Emergence differs as well

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modes. As McKenzie notes, when a new medium is introduced, none of the old media 'surrenders its place entirely; all undergo some adjustments as new forms arrive and new complicities of interest and function emerge.' My emphasis here is on understanding the process of emergence that McKenzie describes and its relation to historical forms of thought. See 'Speech—Manuscript—Print,' 237–58; quoted passage on page 238. N. Katherine Hayles's concept of a 'medial ecology' is relevant for this discussion as well. See *Writing Machines* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2002) and the definition in the book's lexicon available at http://mitpress.mit.edu/mediawork/.

23. Several of the essays in Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol's *Print, Manuscript, and Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000) explore different interpretations of the Renaissance theater. Was it a traditional medium, or 'a distinctively modern public space established by the circulation of printed books,' as Bristol argues? Other essays explore the ways that print and manuscript mutually constituted one another. And yet, in summing up the essays contained in the volume, Marotti and Bristol write that they 'explore the complex interactions between a technologically advanced culture of the printed book and a still powerful traditional culture based on the spoken word, spectacle, and manuscript' (6). The contrast between 'technologically advanced . . . print' and the 'still powerful traditional culture' of non-print media in a volume explicitly designed to explore and complicate that particular teleology suggests just how entrenched the narrative of technological evolution is.

24. An editorial comment from the *New York Times* that appeared while I was drafting this lecture reflects the idea of media as being in fundamental competition with one another. The author notes that consumer spending on books rose 8 percent last year and observes that 'Americans still spend more on books than they do on moviegoing, recorded music, video games or DVD's. Despite all the advances in technology,' the author continues, 'books still have no equal when it comes to telling complicated, nuanced narratives.' (Steven Johnson contests this claim about narrative vigorously in *Everything Bad is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture is Actually Making Us Smarter* [New York: Riverhead Press, 2005].) Yet despite these rising numbers of dollars spent on books, the piece continues, the number of books sold has in fact 'declined 3 percent in the last three years.' Oddly,

Fig. 15. 'Buffalo Bill Stage Coach Attack.' Buffalo Bill's Wild West/
Entertainment Holdings, Inc.

from collage, an approach to textual media that views them in an
aesthetic configuration with one another. 'Collage says there is al-
ways more than one context, always more than one medium in-
volved in any present event.' In focusing on media 'collision' as a
'central fact of life,' collage mutes or suppresses historical ways of
thinking about media in favor of a homogeneous temporality
marked by heterogeneous forms.[25]

The concept of 'emerging media' retains temporality as a cen-
tral element in thinking about media, and in this it owes much to
scholars working in the field of the history of the book. A signal

however, after citing the NEA's 'Reading at Risk' report, the author concludes that what is
needed is 'better English instruction in the schools, more literacy programs and more
money for libraries'—when what might seem to be called for is rather lower prices for
books. *New York Times*, June 5, 2005, 4:13.

25. On collage as one approach to the study of multiple media, see the manifesto of the
Notre Dame Text-Media Studies group, cited above in note 1.

Fig. 16. 'Indian with Rifle on Horseback.' Descriptions of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show indicate that scenes such as these depicted in Fig. 15 and Fig. 16 did take place. These particular poster images are considered authentic depictions of the ritual reenactment of the Indian wars. Battles on the Great Plains, a region considered by Richard Slotkin (*The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* [New York: Athenaeum, 1985]) to be 'the last of America's liberating frontiers,' were part of the display of America's rise to greatness. Buffalo Bill's Wild West/Entertainment Holdings, Inc.

contribution of history of the book scholarship over the last twenty-five years has been to highlight the fact that the book is not a static object, but rather changes its form and function over time. Printing formats, binding styles, distribution networks, and reading practices are defining, not accidental, elements of the book. In a related way, print is not a static medium, but develops its range of meanings and functions within a particular social context. This contingent and historical, rather than essentializing, view of print and the book that is characteristic of history of the book scholarship owes much to a rising awareness that books and

print are not the last word in textual form. It is significant, I think, that AAS's Program in the History of the Book in America was inaugurated in 1983, during the very years when the Internet was transformed from an internal tool of the Department of Defense into a public medium. During these same years the personal computer became a common feature of our work lives.

This anti-essentialist understanding of print and the book stands in sharp contrast to a tradition of scholarship most famously represented by Marshall McLuhan, who treats the print medium as a technology whose visual orientation has determinate effects on human cognitive processes. In McLuhan's deterministic understanding of media, the impact of print on cognition leads directly to certain social consequences, including individualism, democracy, Protestantism, capitalism, and nationalism.[26] Elizabeth Eisenstein developed McLuhan's claims about the social effects of print (while skirting the issue of print's cognitive effects) in *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*.[27] In 1990 Michael Warner issued an important challenge to McLuhan and Eisenstein's technological determinism, arguing in *Letters of the Republic* that the configuration of social effects that McLuhan identified as unvarying features of print culture were, instead, simply one of the possible forms that it might take. Warner identified a print culture organized by classical republican ideals that preceded the liberal nationalist print culture that more nearly resembled McLuhan's model. The medium is not the message, Warner implied, but rather medium and message mutually constitute one another.[28]

26. Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962). In a series of influential works on the cultural and cognitive impact of writing, including *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), anthropologist Jack Goody presents a very similar history, but traces its origins to the written word rather than to print.

27. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

28. 'The Cultural Mediation of the Print Medium,' in Warner, *Letters of the Republic*, 1–34.

Other critics of technological determinism challenged the parallel teleology that leads ineluctably from orality to writing and from manuscript to print. Ruth Finnegan, Brian Street, and others have provided an incisive critique of the tendency to hypostasize and hierarchically code 'oral' and 'literate' societies, as exemplified in the work of Walter Ong and Jack Goody.[29] In their introduction to the first volume of *A History of the Book in America*, David Hall and Hugh Amory emphasize that 'the polarity of . . . literacy and orality must give way . . . to a contextualized description of the uses—discursive or ideological as well as practical or social—to which literacy was put.'[30] History of the book scholarship has contributed importantly to an awareness that, like the book, oral performances and manuscripts are not static vehicles but complexly historical phenomena that change over time.

McLuhan is sometimes dismissed today as a popularizer, and his approach to the history of media has been the focus of important critiques. Claims about the cognitive impact of writing and print are not only experimentally unsubstantiated, they are unsubstantiable with current brain imaging technology. Nevertheless, McLuhan's ideas continue to resonate in cultural analysis, and have even had something of a renaissance with the emergence of the Internet. Over the last fifteen years, cultural critics including Alvin Kernan, Sven Birkerts, Dana Gioia, and Mark Edmundson have developed a narrative of decline that builds on McLuhan's work, even as it diverges from his exuberant vision of the electronic global village. McLuhan's global village held forth the promise of an electronically induced universal harmony that

29. Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance, and Social Context* (rev. ed. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1992), 254–60; 'The "Autonomous" Model: I Literacy and Rationality' and 'The "Autonomous" Model: II Goody,' in Brian V. Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 19–64; Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (1967; reprint, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981) and *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982). Works by Goody are cited in note 23, above.

30. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, eds., *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, vol. 1 of *A History of the Book in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10.

some cultural commentators had envisioned more than a century earlier, when the electric telegraph was introduced. In books with such titles as *The Death of Literature, Gutenberg Elegies,* and *Why Read?*, Kernan, Birkerts, and Edmundson turn McLuhan on his head while sharing many of his basic assumptions.[31] I call this the 'reading at risk' narrative, echoing the title of last year's National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) report on the decline of literary reading, prepared under the guidance of Dana Gioia. The 'reading at risk' narrative celebrates a lost era when the reading of novels, plays, and poems sustained a rich imaginative and social order. These texts trace the putative debasement of our own culture to new media such as television and now, increasingly, the Internet. While they are certainly not alone in their criticisms, what these critics add to the longstanding critique of modern mass media is an account of the supposed psychological and cultural consequences of electronic media consumption in contrast to an idealized model of literary reading. Explicitly building on McLuhan's theories, these writers and scholars pose a strict dichotomy between the forms of subjectivity, cultural identity, and social engagement permitted by literary reading and those created by the consumption of electronic media. Birkerts offers the most pointed version of this jeremiad. Through the impact of electronic media, he writes, 'we are experiencing the gradual but steady erosion of human presence.' Birkerts argues that as it becomes 'easier and easier to accept the idea of electronic tribalism,' which he refers to as 'hive life,' 'subjective individualism is now not the goal but the impedance factor.'[32] He values what he believes is the endangered subjective individualism which for him is

31. Alvin Kernan, *The Death of Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1994); Mark Edmundson, *Why Read?* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004).

32. Birkerts, *Gutenberg Elegies*, 228. Birkerts cites Kernan and is cited approvingly by Edmundson. Thus while he is the least scholarly expositor of the position I am describing, he nevertheless usefully reflects some of its major claims and tendencies.

nurtured above all through the solitary reading of novels, a position echoed by Edmundson. Birkerts cites Kernan when he dates this practice of reading to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, before the advent of television threatened it. I want to stress that the older forms of electronic 'new media'—the telegraph, the electric light (which dramatically facilitated private reading), and so on—have no place in these narratives, for these accounts require a textual past uncontaminated with the preoccupations and anxieties of the electronic media of today.[33]

And yet, as a consideration of a number of canonical texts of the American Renaissance period readily shows, literary writers construed their practices of authorship and expectations about readership in relation to that first wave of electrical media. Walt Whitman sang 'the body electric' and celebrated the unifying powers of the telegraph. Henry David Thoreau built his cabin close to the railroad tracks and the telegraph lines. Thoreau found in new technologies a provocation to rethink the meanings of existing verbal forms in new and revealing ways. In the course of *Walden* he figures himself variously as a journalist, an express messenger, and a telegrapher attempting to communicate the messages of nature.[34] *Walden* offers an extended meditation on the meaning of textual forms, including not only new technologies of the word such as the telegraph but also the varieties of sound and speech (the 'voices' of nature, conversation, oration), writing (the journal, the words scratched on a bit of bark), and print ('little reading,' as he calls popular fiction, versus the classics). Just as today we rethink textual forms in light of the World Wide Web, so in the 1850s Thoreau rethought textual forms in light of the telegraph.

33. More precisely, these narratives have no *conscious* place for older 'new media.' Birkerts takes Samuel Morse's 'What hath God wrought' as his epigraph, tacitly acknowledging the parallels between contemporary debates about the effects of media and the very similar debates prompted by the electric telegraph; yet he does not pursue this implicit connection of his argument to an earlier generation of new electrical media.

34. Thanks to James P. Shortall for calling these passages to my attention.

Nathaniel Hawthorne similarly reflected on the emergence of new media and offered a strikingly familiar contrast between electrical forms and print in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852). Hawthorne's misanthropic narrator Miles Coverdale identifies himself as a minor (and aggrieved) author. Attending a mesmeric performance in a village lyceum, another of the new performance media of Hawthorne's day, Coverdale comments sullenly on the rich range of entertainments presented there and observes that 'Of late years [the lyceum] has come strangely into vogue, when the natural tendency of things would seem to be, to substitute lettered for oral methods of addressing the public.' Coverdale's resentment about the performance genres available at the lyceum is further exacerbated by the mesmeric spectacle of Professor Westervelt and the Veiled Lady, which combines elements of the Oriental exotic, the spiritual, the erotic, and the scientific. The professor's lecture echoes the optative contemporary celebrations of telegraphy, presenting the utopian prospects of the mesmeric electrical fluid which he promises will 'link soul to soul, and the present life to what we call futurity, with a closeness that should finally convert both worlds into one great, mutually conscious brotherhood.'[35] In Hawthorne's other mesmeric novel, *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), the aging and unstable Clifford Pyncheon offers similar descriptions of the electrical union made possible through telegraphy. These are not visions that meet with the author's approval. In both novels, Hawthorne characterizes the electrical union of souls (akin to Birkerts's image of the electronic 'hive') as a violation of the subject's integrity that overtly resembles sexual violation (as indeed was believed to be the case with mesmerism). What these Hawthorne novels suggest is that the contrast between print-based subjective integrity on the one hand and performative and electrical mass forms that characterizes

35. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, in Hawthorne, *Collected Novels* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 802, 806.

many analyses of communicative media today, on the other hand, was already well established when the idealized figures of the author and the novel reader that appear in recent works on the death of literature first took shape.

The Histories of New Media

To write history is to tell a story, and stories require narrative arcs. One of the attractions of McLuhan and Eisenstein's technological approach to print and its impact on culture is that it manages to be simultaneously relativistic, in that human societies are shaped by their environments, so there is variety, and deterministic insofar as the major force shaping human societies is verbal technology, which determines everything from governmental structure to forms of subjectivity, thus ensuring clear stages of development. The combination of relativism and determinism offers a potent historiographical narrative, as is evident in its adaptation by critics of the Internet. Whether a writer offers a Whig history of technological progress, as both McLuhan and Eisenstein do in their different ways, or a jeremiad of technological decline, as the 'reading at risk' critics do, the essential elements remain the same: new technologies replace old ones, and in the process entire societies are transformed.

If instead of imagining a fixed sequence of media technologies we think of verbal media as always emerging, always in flux, and always in relation to one another, if we stress the fact that print does not supplant oral forms but coexists with new modes of performance, if we highlight the development of manuscript forms, if we foreground the constitutive relationship between print culture and electronic media, if, in short, we emphasize that media co-evolve rather than develop sequentially, what more then is there to say about them? In their introduction to *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, David Hall and Hugh Amory emphasize that the volume offers 'a narrative history.' If we broaden the study of the history of the book to tell the diverse 'Histories of Print, Manuscript, and Performance,' what sorts of narrative resources will we

have? Hall and Amory observe in their introduction that book his-
tory 'intersects with' discussions of 'orality, writing, and print.'[36]
How can a narrative structured around emergence give meaning-
ful shape to these intersections?

In order to begin to answer this question, I will turn now to two
prominent American cultural figures from the high age of print
whose literary careers can be most fruitfully approached by ex-
ploring the contemporaneous configurations of emergent textual
media. My first example is Daniel Webster, the statesman and
orator who was arguably the most important cultural figure of his
day, beyond even Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson admired and
emulated Webster through much of his career. It is Webster that
Emerson has in mind when he observes that 'the writer is but an
orator manqué,' lamenting the writer's lack of physical presence
to his audience.[37] In 1831 Emerson penned the following lines,
which suggest the emblematic quality of Webster's communica-
tive power: 'Let Webster's lofty face / Ever on thousands shine, /
A beacon set that Freedom's race / Might gather omens from that
radiant sign.'[38] Emerson refers here to the reputation that Web-
ster had acquired during the 1820s as an international advocate of
freedom in such commemorative speeches as the Bunker Hill
Monument address, which circulated through the Americas and
Europe. The image of Webster's face as a beacon and a radiant
sign, reminiscent of Moses's shining face as he descended from
Sinai, suggests his relationship to the novel forms of mass and dis-
tance communication that were so important in the emergence of
democratic thought (fig. 17). This was, emphatically, an embodied
relationship, as the constant references by contemporaries to

36. Amory and Hall, *Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, 8.
37. Emerson is quoted without citation in F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 22.
38. Brooks Atkinson, ed., *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Modern Library, 1940), 816.
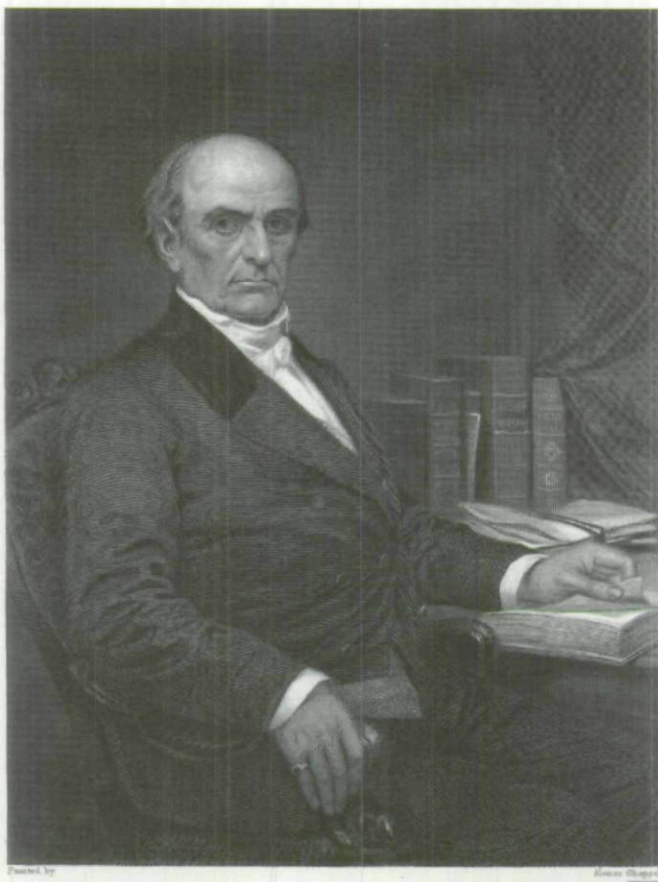
D. anl. Webster

Fig. 17. Daniel Webster, from a daguerreotype from life.
Lithograph 39.8 x 24.5 cm. Courtesy American Antiquarian
Society

Webster's appearance make clear. More common than Emerson's
image here of Webster's shining face was the image in an Emer-
son poem from 1834, in which he describes Webster's much-
celebrated 'great forehead' (816), an ubiquitous metaphor for
Webster's powers of mind. For more than two decades, Webster

embodied for many the relationship between spoken and written eloquence, the powers of the mind to transcend space and time, and the spread of political liberty.

Like Edmund Burke, who was his immediate role model, and like Cicero, who was the ancient figure inspiring both Webster and Burke, Webster sought to form United States politics by shaping the communicative media and the rhetorical forms of political language. Famed equally for their eloquently delivered orations and for their elegant written prose, Cicero and Burke also embodied the role of defender of the republic. It was to this combination of textual and political achievements that Webster aspired in his Seventh of March speech in favor of the Compromise of 1850, endeavoring through his eloquence to maintain the Union even at the cost of the perpetuation of slavery.[39] It was on this speech that Webster's literary editor believed he wanted to rest his fame. Instead, the speech signaled the end of his political efficacy and alienated an influential portion of his constituency. This political failure contributed in turn to his eventual loss of literary reputation.

This eventuality took some decades to unfold. Before the tide turned against Webster's fame as a man of letters, however, his reputation for eloquence developed into a minor literary phenomenon. In 1851 Webster's longtime friend Edward Everett published a textual monument to him, a six–volume collection of Webster's speeches and other writings, which Webster helped to prepare. So far as I have been able to find, this was the first collection of an orator's works planned and executed during his own lifetime. As such, it bears comparison to Ben Jonson preparing an edition of his own plays for publication. The literary culture of this so-called Golden Age of American Oratory makes this comparison less preposterous than it might at first seem. As the great

39. 'The Seventh of March Speech,' March 7, 1850, in *Daniel Webster: 'The Completest Man,'* Kenneth E. Shewmaker, ed. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1990), 121–30.

republican verbal art, oratory was seen by many Americans to be particularly worthy of note. In contrast to poetry, drama, and fiction, where the British were the acknowledged superiors, Americans were seen to excel at oral eloquence. Books recounting the biographies of famous American orators proliferated, as did anthologies of speeches. Recitations of famous addresses were common, both in school and on the stage.

In the decades after his death, Webster continued to be accorded the treatment of a great man of American letters and given a role in literary history. In 1879 Edwin P. Whipple edited a one-volume edition of *The Great Speeches and Orations of Daniel Webster* which included Whipple's fifty-page essay on 'Daniel Webster as a Master of English Style.' Focusing on Webster's 'plain, terse, clear, forcible' style that Whipple supposed reflected Webster's closeness to nature, the editor compared Webster favorably to Burke.[40] In writing this tribute to Webster, Whipple sought to contend with a very different evaluation of the orator's literary contributions than Emerson had presented in his speech opposing the Fugitive Slave Law. Emerson celebrated the great man's talents as the effect of a powerful mind: 'Great is the privilege of eloquence,' Emerson observed. 'What gratitude does every man feel to him who speaks well for the right—who translates truth into language entirely plain and clear!' And yet, Webster lacked a measure of 'moral sensibility' that was 'proportionate' to his intellect. As a consequence, Emerson insisted, a 'sterility of thought' characterizes his speeches, and 'not an observation on life and manners, not an aphorism . . . can pass into literature from his writings.'[41] Rather than persist as the textual monument that Webster, Everett, and Whipple envisioned as Webster's contribution to literary history, as Emerson predicted, Webster's once-eloquent

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40. Edwin P. Whipple, 'Daniel Webster as a Master of English Style,' in *The Great Speeches and Orations of Daniel Webster* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1879), xi-lxiii. For the description of Webster's style, see page xiii. For comparisons with Burke, see pages iv, xxix, lv.
41. Emerson, , 864–65,

words fell into obscurity. It is Emerson's, rather than Everett's and Whipple's, vision of Webster that persists today.

Webster's intertwined political and literary careers are useful for clarifying what I mean when I suggest that verbal forms co-emerge, rather than emerge in a sequence from speech to writing to print. In his excellent study of the consolidation of national identity in the early republic, David Waldstreicher has demonstrated how the era's many ceremonies, speeches, celebrations, and parades signified both as events or performances *and* as printed accounts that circulated in the newspapers. He persuasively demonstrates that both performance and print were necessary and mutually dependent modalities for the consolidation of American nationalism.[42] My point in discussing Webster is similar, insofar as his orations signified both as performances—including Webster's original delivery and that of numerous schoolroom and drawing room imitators—and in print—as newspaper accounts, in printed separates, in speech anthologies, and in his collected works. Beyond the fact that Webster's speeches circulated between oral and printed media, however, I would emphasize that in Webster's oeuvre, spoken and printed forms of language emerged both in relation to one another and in relation to the political ideals of freedom and union that he aspired to embody in a monumental legacy. Webster represented a form of communicative power that translated from speech to writing, that resided in the power of mind to overcome material obstacles of time and space, and that promised universal brotherhood and freedom. Webster was, in short, a human embodiment of the utopian dreams that contemporaries also invested in the telegraph (remember Emerson's early image of Webster's face as a beacon and a radiant sign). Emerson's post-1850 prediction, accurate as it turned out, that the printed record of Webster's speeches would

42. David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

fail to make any permanent contribution to literature, signals the collapse of a vision that brought together universal communicative power with political ideals in the person of a statesman. Webster embodied a distinctive cultural moment in which oratory was a signal form of verbal art, traversing oral and printed media, and articulating high ideals for the relationship between language and statesmanship. This vision of the orator's linked communicative and political power emerged with the Revolution and largely ended with the downfall of Daniel Webster.

Emily Dickinson offers not only a remarkably different literary sensibility from Webster's but also a different and equally self-conscious engagement with the emergent properties of verbal media. Dickinson snidely suggested the difference herself in 'I'm Nobody,' one of her more cloying poems, in which she contrasts the intimate public of nobodies (presumably readers of her poetry) to the public world of frog-like somebodies such as Webster who 'tell [their] name[s]—The livelong June—/ To an admiring bog.' Because the vast majority of Dickinson's poetry remained in manuscript throughout her life, and because she appears not to have circulated those manuscripts very widely, the intimate public of nobodies was very small, perhaps for some poems only herself and her sister-in-law Susan Dickinson, perhaps for other poems herself alone, a public of one. Dickinson's resistance to print publication is a well-known fact of her literary career, attested to in such poems as 'This is my letter to the world' and 'Publication is the auction of the mind of man.' The alternative mode of publication that she imagined for herself involved hand-written fascicles bound together in a pamphlet-like form. Dickinson's fascicles emerged as a subject of sustained critical interest in the early 1990s, prompted by the publication of R. W. Franklin's two-volume print edition of *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* in 1981. These volumes first made available to a wide audience the manuscript books that until that time had required a visit to Harvard's Houghton Library, where the fascicles are closely

guarded. Before this publication appeared, Dickinson's poems had been edited in a wide variety of ways. The most standardizing approaches reduced or eliminated her distinctive punctuation and capitalization practices and her lists of alternative phrasings, and at times even regularized her rhymes and meters. More recent editions seek to reproduce in print those aspects of Dickinson's manuscript poems that an editor deems meaningful.

In a deliberately provocative essay from 1993 on Dickinson's manuscripts, Susan Howe pursues the logic of fidelity to the manuscript almost to its end, arguing that we must understand the fascicles as embodiments of Dickinson's visual poetics, which require strict attention to her use of space, ink, and sound. Howe writes: 'The space is the poem's space. Letters are sounds we see. Sounds leap to the eye. Word lists, crosses, blanks, and ruptured stanzas are points of contact and displacement. Line breaks and visual contrapuntal stresses represent an athematic compositional intention. This space is the poet's space,' Howe concludes. 'Its demand is her method.'[43] Howe stresses the importance of the sounds of the poem as they relate to its visual components to produce meaning. She in effect imagines Dickinson's fascicles as relatives of the artist's book, a hybrid genre of text and visual or tactile art.[44] Treated as an artist's book, analogous, for instance, to the masterworks of contemporary German artist Anselm Kiefer, Dickinson's fascicles could not be reproduced in a printed form at all. The fascicles would have to be replicated *in toto*, with all their material components reproduced as accurately as possible.

Howe herself is a well-known language poet, and as such she is profoundly aware of the properties of verbal media. She is also highly attentive to the social meanings that verbal forms accrue and the institutional mechanisms of their reproduction. For Howe, Dickinson's preference for manuscript fascicles manifests her refusal

43. Susan Howe, *The Birth-mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), 139.
44. Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York: Granary Books, 1995).

to collaborate with the male-dominated institutions of publishing. Rather than reflect the stereotyped image of Dickinson 'isolated from historical consciousness,' where the material form of the manuscript fascicles embodies Dickinson's isolation and ahistoricism, in Howe's view the fascicles register instead an intense historical consciousness about the ways that the material forms of gender relate to the material forms of printed textual production.[45]

The refusal of print publication is much more than a gesture of negation, however; it opens up alternative modes for the production of poetic meaning, modes that draw on the material properties of manuscript and the interrelation of poems in the fascicles. In her 1992 book *Choosing Not Choosing*, Sharon Cameron explores some of the consequences of reading Dickinson's poems in the fascicles as if their order had meaning.[46] She treats each set of poems in a fascicle as an intentional sequence and tracks themes and development (or lack of development) both within and between fascicles. What Cameron and Howe help us to see, in their different ways, is the emergent quality of manuscript in Dickinson's work. Dickinson's use of manuscript differs from earlier instances of manuscript circulation, first, in that the greater accessibility of print and the absence of overt censorship made the poet's rejection of print a particular statement about her society; second, insofar as the context of modern feminist thought in which she wrote informed her choice of medium; and third, in the sense that her specific choices—of the layout of words and marks on the page, of the order of poems in the fascicles—are

45. In a recent sharp critique of Howe's materialism, Walter Benn Michaels argues for the privileging of the cognitive impact of texts as intellectual (not material) objects over the affective impact of texts as material forms. Ideas (or the content of the text), not subject positions (or the affective response to the material artifact), should be understood as the focus of intellectual and political action and as the driving force of history. It is an argument for authorial intention, against identity politics, materialism and culturalism, and for a vaguely Hegelian concept of history. Taken to its logical limit, Michaels's approach necessitates an end to the history of the book and other methodologies focused on the media of textual expression. See *The Shape of the Signifier: 1967 to the End of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1–18.

46. Sharon Cameron, *Choosing Not Choosing: Dickinson's Fascicles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
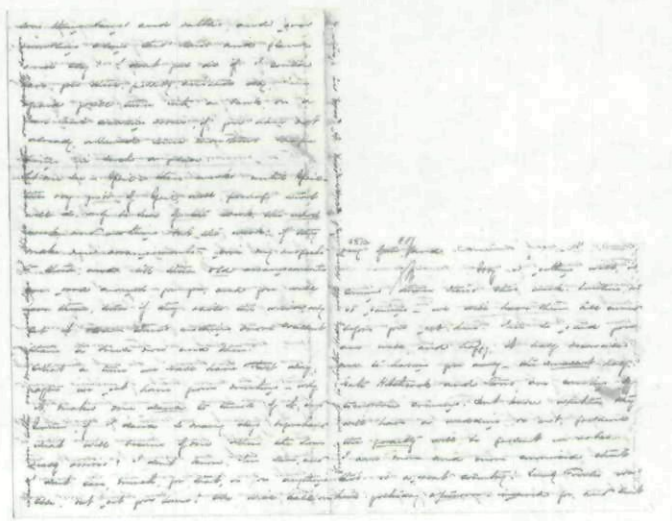
Fig. 18. A mutilated Dickinson manuscript—letter—with content cut away. Reproduced by permission of Amherst College Archives and Special Collections. By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University (A587a) © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

products of the poet herself and reflect her awareness of the material properties of her medium, an awareness that she shared with near contemporaries such as Stéphane Mallarmé, who in different ways interrogated the material practices of print.[47]

Dickinson's failure to control her work, which is the subject of Howe's critique, is nowhere more visible than in the website prepared by Martha Nell Smith and available at the Dickinson Electronic Archive (www.emilydickinson.org). Smith's article is titled 'mutilations: what was erased, inked over, and cut away.' Here the impact of manuscripts with chunks cut away (fig. 18) or entire pages inked out is considerable, even in the admittedly inadequate photographic and digital reproductions. Smith discusses the range

47. Michael Davidson, 'The Material Page' in *A Book of the Book: Some Works and Projections about the Book and Writing*, ed. Jerome Rothenberg and Steven Clay (New York: Granary Books, 2000), 71–79.
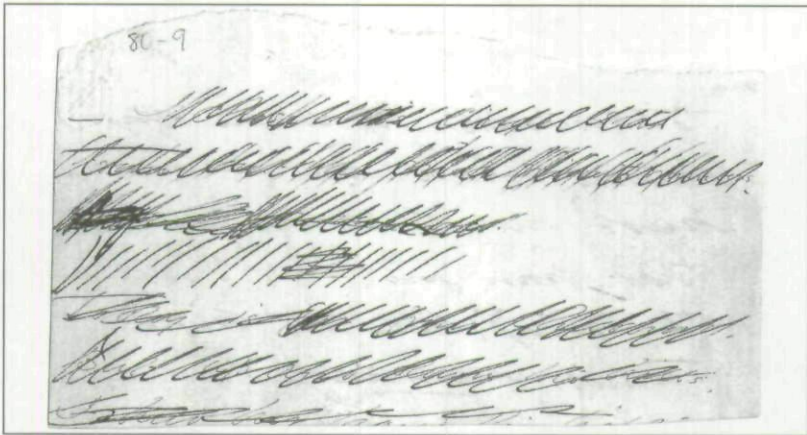
Fig. 19. An example of inked-out text in an Emily Dickinson manuscript, fascicle 2 (A 80–9). Amherst College Archives and Special Collections.

of reasons for the mutilations, some of them benign—a signature was cut from a letter to gratify an autograph seeker—some sinister—text was inked out to suppress evidence of the close relationship between Dickinson and her sister-in-law (fig. 19). In another web publication that is not part of the archive, Marta Werner has included images of some of Dickinson's very late works, which involve phrases written on slips of paper that are then arranged into forms with folds and pins, something like a collage, suggesting even more strongly Dickinson's affinities with the artist's book (fig. 21). The electronic turn in Dickinson studies was, in a sense, anticipated by Dickinson herself. As Jerusha Hull McCormack has recently argued, Dickinson was 'remarkably responsive to the implications of technological innovation—even to its possibilities for poetry,' such as the 'gnomic dispatches of the telegraph' that are a 'natural correlative' of her style.[48]

48. Jerusha Hull McCormack, 'Domesticating Delphi: Emily Dickinson and the Electro-Magnetic Telegraph,' *American Quarterly* 55 (December 2003): 569–601; quotations on pages 572–73. McCormack further discusses Dickinson's awareness of the connections between electricity, telegraphy, mesmerism, spiritualism, and poetic inspiration.
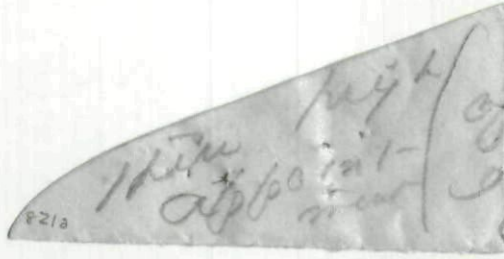
Fig. 20. Envelope with pinholes indicating former location of text now separated and illustrated as Fig. 21. By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University A821/AA821a © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

The ready availability of the images of Dickinson's manuscripts via the Internet suggests one important way that electronic archives will reshape our understanding of verbal media. We can see directly, if not with the full detail we would like, the range of textual forms that Dickinson employed, her attentiveness to and playfulness with textual media. We can also see what happened to those texts, the mutilations or the unwitting neglect of significant material properties, such as the pins holding the late works together. This testimonial work is one important way that the emerging media of today can help us to better understand and preserve the emerging media of early America, making visible the range of textual forms from wampum belts to staged readings to

Fig. 21. Lines written in pencil on two fragments of an envelope once held to-gether with a straight pin. Amherst College Archives and Special Collections.

popular pamphlets to dramatized novels. More generally, today's emerging electronic media should provoke us to think creatively about how we can use new media to more fully represent and understand these and the many other emerging media of the past. In conclusion, let me suggest that my two examples of media emergence—Daniel Webster and Emily Dickinson—highlight historical formations of textuality as they are influenced by institutions and individuals as well as by the physical properties of both existing and new media. They provide us with instances of what David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins term the 'aesthetics of transition.'[49] It is said that there is no better way to see time pass than to live with a young child. In much the same way, there is no better way to see 'history' take shape than to con-template the social and aesthetic effects of a new medium.

49. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, 'Introduction: Toward an Aesthetics of Tran-sition,' in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2003), 1–16.